A

LETTER

TO THE

REV. DR. COOPER,

ON THE

ORIGIN OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT;

IN ANSWER TO HIS

SERMON,

Preached before the UNIVERSITY of OXFORD, on the Day appointed by Proclamation for a

GENERAL FAST.

Nomen Pacis dulce eſt & ipſa Res ſalutaris: ſed inter Pacem & Servitutem plurimum intereſt; Pax eſt tranquilla Libertas; Servitus Malorum omnium poſtremum non modo Bello ſed etiam Morte repellendum.

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MDCCLXXVII.

A

LETTER

TO THE

REV. DR. COOPER.

IT cannot be expected, that the advocates for the principles of Whiggiſm ſhould deſcend to the ungrateful taſk of expoſing the infamy of every proſtituted prieſt, and refuting the abſurdities of every penſioned Jacobite, who embraced the favourable opportunity of the truly farcical ſolemnity of the General Faſt; of venting their ſpleen not only againſt the united colonies, but alſo againſt the fundamental principles of government. The preſs has already teemed with productions of this

nature; the authors of which, from that anxious deſire of preferment which is the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of prieſts, at leaſt of dignified divines, have vied with each other in ſcurrility and abſurdity. Indeed it is a melancholy reflection, that the dignitaries of the church have ever been willing, in all ages of the world, to give their ſanction to corrupt miniſters and tyrannical princes, in return for the ſupport which the latter have ever afforded to the narrow bigotry of eſtabliſhments ſo congenial to their own. Civil and eccleſiaſtical tyranny have ever gone hand in hand, the pillars of their mutual uſurpations, and the panders of their mutual ambitions; the former, while under the maſk of apoſtolical ſanctity they fleece mankind *pro ſalute animæ*, and inſult the unhappy ſufferers, whom they perſecute for their opinions with the hypocritical pretence of ſaving their ſouls, never fail, by a ſeaſonable application of the comfortable doctrine of paſſive obedience, to prepare men for the

yoke

yoke of civil bondage; the latter, while they ſecretly undermine, or, in the determined language of authority, openly attack the liberties of their country, are ever ready to interpoſe the ſecular arm to calm the turbulence of thoſe refractory ſpirits, who diſregard the thunders of the church. In the recent affair of the petition from the ſociety at the Feathers tavern, we have ſeen the influence of the miniſter openly exerted to ſupport the tottering fabric of eccleſiaſtical domination. It would indeed have been a very ungrateful return for that diſtinguiſhed ſupport, if they had neglected that favourable opportunity of expreſſing their loyalty to the *beſt* and moſt *pious* of princes, and their affectionate attachment to his *virtuous* miniſters. No wonder then that the public has been peſtered with numerous pieces of this ſort; which, from their inſignificancy, will ſhortly ſink unnoticed into merited contempt.

But, Sir, the diſcourſe with which you have been pleaſed to favour the world, deſerves not to be reckoned in that claſs: it will not only juſtify, it requires a particular examination. The circumſtance of the place in which it was delivered, before one of the moſt numerous and reſpectable audiences in the kingdom—the heirs to great titles and eſtates—the riſing hopes of this nation—ſeveral of whom have their political creed yet to form, render its evil effects more extenſive. The claſſic eaſe and elegance of your ſtile, which charms the fancy while it deludes the judgment, concurs to point out the neceſſity of public animadverſion. At the ſame time that I am conſcious of my own inability to do juſtice to my ſubject, and of the ſuperior weight of a very reſpectable opponent, I am animated by the conſcious reflection, that the force of naked and unadorned truth, muſt ultimately prevail over poliſhed periods and ſpecious ſophiſtries; and that the common ſenſe of mankind will lead them

them to reprobate thoſe arbitrary tenets, which are ſo degrading to human nature, ſo ſubverſive of human happineſs, and ſo incompatible with the firſt principles of human ſociety, by however reſpectable authority ſuch doctrines may be ſupported.

Your candour, Sir, will, I flatter myſelf, prevent you from too haſtily attributing any warm expreſſions of marked abhorrence of the principles which you have inculcated, and the meaſures which you have defended into the ſmalleſt idea of perſonal diſreſpect. Far be it from me to deſcend to the illiberality of a perſonal attack on any man of character and principle, who may have adopted a different line of political conduct from myſelf, or may entertain oppoſite notions with reſpect to civil or religious liberty. The wretch who, like * a once celebrated Iriſh patriot, ſupports a corrupt miniſtry, in contradiction to his

* The Right Hon. Henry Flood, one of the joint Vice Treaſurers of Ireland.

better knowledge; or, like the juſtly execrated director of our maritime affairs, betrays the confidence of private friendſhip, to glut the revenge of a favourite, deſerves perſonally to be held forth as an object of deteſtation. But the man of principle is reſpectable even in his errors; and ſuch, Sir, the voice of the world pronounces you to be.

Some perſons, who call themſelves *moderate men*, have of late endeavoured to propagate an opinion, that the difference in *principle* between Whigs and Tories is now at an end; and, as one of them expreſſed himſelf in a news-paper eſſay, "that the love of liberty is human nature "in England:" that therefore the diſtinction between them as oppoſite parties is idle and ridiculous, and kept up by factious and deſigning men, to ſerve the purpoſes of their own private ambition. But any perſon who peruſes your ſermon with the ſmalleſt degree of attention, muſt be convinced of the fallacy of ſuch arguments; for

for the old doctrine of paſſive obedience is therein delivered in the moſt expreſs terms, and without any modification. You aſſert, Sir, without reſerve, " that it is difficult to " aſſign any reaſons which will juſtify the " rebellion of ſubjects againſt the ſovereign " authority." Could Leſlie or Sacheverel ſay more?

The abſurdity of ſuch arbitrary tenets has been repeatedly demonſtrated; by none more fully than the great Sydney, who gave the moſt unequivocal proof of his ſincerity, by ſealing his opinions with his blood. But as your diſcourſe may have fallen into the hands of ſeveral, who (as I before obſerved) may have their political creed yet to form, and may not have met with other fuller diſquiſitions on that intereſting ſubject, I flatter myſelf, that a brief recapitulation of arguments which have been often urged, will not be deemed either uſeleſs or impertinent.

The principle of ſelf-preſervation was wiſely implanted in the human heart, by the all-wiſe and benevolent Author of Nature, for the protection of man from injury and inſult. We are led by the irreſiſtible impulſe of our nature to reſiſt wrong, and repel the oppreſſor: it is a principle daily practiſed in common life by the beſt and wiſeſt men, and allowed even by thoſe divines who have inculcated the moſt unlimited paſſive obedience, in *political matters* to be conformable to the ſtricteſt principles of morality, and to the pureſt dictates of Chriſtianity; to be not only juſtifiable but praiſe-worthy. The man who kills the midnight ruffian, or quells a lawleſs banditti of plunderers, is crowned with the approbation and thanks of the community. If then the law of nature and of nature's God juſtifies the reſiſtance of individuals to the oppreſſion of individuals; if it is lawful to repel thoſe petty plunderers of the age whoſe ſphere of miſchief is more confined, can a reaſonable man

man for a moment entertain a notion, that it is forbidden by the divine law, that an injured people ſhould reſiſt the oppreſſion of wretched and tyrannical rulers, the moſt nefarious of all robbers, the blackeſt of all criminals? Shall that principle which holds good in all the leſſer departments of life, be then only held to be falſe when applied to political, the firſt and moſt important of all, connections between man and man? ——Impoſſible——We muſt therefore acknowledge, that reſiſtance to the tyranny of the ſovereign power is juſtifiable; or, rather, in the words of judge Blackſtone, "that in the great and independent ſoci-
"ety which every nation compoſes, there
"is no ſuperior to reſort to, but the law of
"nature; no method to redreſs the in-
"fringements of that law, but the actual
"exertion of private force; and that in
"one and the ſame nation, when the fun-
"damental principles of their common
"union are ſuppoſed to be invaded, and
"more eſpecially, when the appointment

"of

" of their chief magiſtrate is alledged to be
" unduly made, the only tribunal to which
" the complainants can appeal, is that of
" the God of Battles; the only proceſs by
" which the appeal can be carried on, is
" that of a civil and inteſtine war." *

I am not ignorant that attempts have been made to ſupport the abſurd doctrine of paſſive obedience by quotations from ſcripture. But in all our reſearches after goſpel truth, it muſt be laid down as a fundamental maxim, that whenever the literal ſenſe of any text militates againſt the plain dictates of right reaſon, and the common ſenſe of mankind, it muſt be ſo explained, and ſuch a latitude of interpretation be adopted, as that it may be made conſiſtent with both. If this rule was not obſerved, our religion would be a compound of abſurdity and inconſiſtency, and deſerve the contempt and deriſion which

* Blackſtone's Commentaries, Book I. Chap. 3.

Deiſts

Deiſts have ſo plentifully and ſo unjuſtly beſtowed on it. It is on a literal interpretation of ſcripture, that the abſurdities of popiſh ſuperſtition, and the ill-grounded, though conſcientious ſcruples of * a miſguided, but moſt reſpectable claſs of men among ourſelves, are grounded.

In the preſent caſe it muſt be obſerved, that the text on which you, Sir, ſeem to build your doctrine of unlimited ſubmiſſion to the higher powers, is followed by another declaratory of the reaſon why ſubmiſſion of any ſort is due; "for rulers are "not a terror unto good works, but unto "the evil:" which text clearly and expreſsly fixes the boundaries of ſovereign authority, and lays it down in the moſt unequivocal manner, that government was inſtituted not for the gratification of the governors, but for the happineſs of the governed; and from whence we may deduce, that as our ſubmiſſion to governors

* The Quakers.

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is founded on the notion, that they are "a terror not unto good works, but unto "the evil;" that when they ceaſe to be a terror unto the evil, and become ſo unto the good, that ſubmiſſion is no longer due, but reſiſtance juſtifiable. It is indeed ſurprizing, that the doctrine of non-reſiſtance ſhould be ſo ſtrongly enforced by high church divines, ſince the hiſtory of the Maccabees, who were the leaders of the Jewiſh nation in a glorious and ſucceſsful reſiſtance to a ſanguinary tyrant, is expreſsly recommended as a book of moral tendency in thoſe articles which they ſupport with ſuch intolerant zeal.

The circumſtances which gave occaſion to the admonition in the text muſt be attentively conſidered, before we can poſſibly form any complete judgment of the meaning of the apoſtle. It muſt be obſerved then, that ſome Chriſtians entertained viſionary notions of Independence on the civil power; and ſuppoſed, that having

having the pure law of God revealed to them, for the direction of their lives, and being diſciples of an heavenly maſter, that they were not ſubordinate to human laws, nor amenable to pagan juriſdiction. St. Paul, juſtly alarmed, thought proper immediately to expreſs his diſapprobation of ſuch wild doctrines, ſo ſubverſive of human ſociety; as they tended to eſtabliſh a right in the individuals of a ſtate of counteracting and reſiſting the ſociety at large, and ſo unfriendly to the propagation of Chriſtianity, as they excited the jealouſy of the reigning powers, and provoked them to acts of violence and perſecution. To them therefore in oppoſition to this opinion, is the exhortation of the text addreſſed: it contains rules to direct the conduct of a particular ſect, individuals in a wide extended ſociety, profeſſing a different religion: it could not be meant to apply to the caſe of a whole people, groaning under the oppreſſion of tyrannic ſway: nor can any other inferences be drawn

drawn from it for the direction of our lives, than that it is the duty of individuals in a ſtate patiently to acquieſce in the deciſions, and to ſubmit to the laws advanced by the ſociety at large.

You ſeem, Sir, to conſider the notion of "original compacts as viſionary and "enthuſiaſtic;" but give me leave to enquire upon what other rational ground can governors claim our allegiance? You will tell me that their power is "derived from "God, and not ſolely from the people." But can it be reaſonably ſuppoſed, that the almighty and beneficent Maker of the Univerſe, when he erected the great maſs of mankind, intended that they ſhould be ſubject to the arbitrary caprice of a few, and thoſe few perhaps the weakeſt and moſt abandoned of men? The notion of a divine right to commit injury with impunity, militates againſt all our ideas of the wiſdom, the juſtice, and the benign attributes of the Supreme Being.

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Can any man who conſults the dictates of his own natural reaſon, and determines to think for himſelf, be led to ſuppoſe, that a Being of infinite juſtice and mercy, and the moſt unbounded benevolence, ever gave the ſanction of right to the ſword of conquerors; and (what carries with it ſtill greater abſurdity) gave to their poſterity a right to the power acquired by the villany of their forefathers. If this is the caſe, he muſt have created the world for the encouragement of murder and rapine, and as a prize for thoſe who can carry wickedneſs to its utmoſt pitch of impious refinement.—An idea equally ſhocking and abſurd.

From God then no man can derive a right to govern, unleſs expreſsly appointed by a particular revelation; and, with reſpect to natural right, all men are by nature equal, conſequently no individual, by any rule of juſtice and equity, can claim authority over the reſt. On what then

then can government be founded, but on the conſent of the governed; that is, in other words, on compact? It is the only lawful tenure by which princes hold their crowns; which compact, if they preſume to violate; if they attempt to ſubvert inſtead of executing the laws, and oppreſs and not protect their ſubjects, they forfeit their right to govern; they become amenable to the juſtice of their people; they deſerve depoſition, nay even death.

If we conſult the Iſraelitiſh annals, we ſhall find that even David, whom an inſpired prophet, by a particular commiſſion from heaven, had pointed out to the children of Iſrael as their deſtined king, was not admitted to the exerciſe of the regal power till he had entered into a compact with his ſubjects. The account of this tranſaction may be found in the beginning of the eleventh chapter of the firſt book of Chronicles; it is thus expreſſed: "Then "all the children of Iſrael gathered themſelves

" ſelves to David unto Hebron, ſaying,
" Behold, we are thy bone and thy fleſh.
" And moreover in time paſt, even when
" Saul was King, thou waſt he that led-
" deſt out and broughteſt in Iſrael: and
" the Lord thy God ſaid unto thee, thou
" ſhalt feed my people Iſrael, and thou
" ſhalt be ruler over my people Iſrael.
" Therefore came all the elders of Iſrael to
" the King in Hebron; and David made a
" covenant with them in Hebron before
" the Lord; and they anointed David king
" over Iſrael, according to the word of
" the Lord by Samuel." What is this but a popular election, and a ſolemn compact between prince and people; not implied merely, but particularly expreſſed? The chiefs of the people, after expreſſing their ſenſe of the merits of David, and their conviction that he was the man deſtined by divine providence to be their ruler, dutifully acquieſcing in that deſtination, proceed to make a covenant with him. What can be implied by that ex-

preſſion, but that, in conſideration of his obſerving the laws, they agree to ſubmit to his government? They then, and not till then, not ſubmitting unconditionally even to him who was the choice of God himſelf, admit him to the regal office with the uſual formalities.

In our own country this original compact is expreſsly declared to ſubſiſt by the poſitive law of the land. The Convention Parliament, which depoſed King James, and conferred the crown on King William, in their preamble to the famous reſolution that the throne was vacant, aſſign the following, among many other very cogent reaſons, "that he had violated the "original contract between prince and "people;" and afterwards our great deliverer, at his coronation, publicly and ſolemnly entered into compact with his ſubjects.

In abſolute monarchies, where this original compact is not expreſſed, no allegiance is, or can be due, from the ſubject to the ſovereign. When an abſolute prince exerts his authority only to make his ſubjects happy, they will chearfully ſubmit to his government; for the people are not naturally prone to revolt and inſurrection: and however defective the forms of their conſtitution may be, as long as it is well adminiſtered, and their happineſs is conſulted, will, for the ſake of peace, acquieſce: and poſſibly ſuch their acquieſcence may be prudent, though at the ſame time it muſt be laid down as a fundamental maxim, that the ſubjects of an arbitrary government have a right to revolt from their prince, however equitably he may exerciſe his unlimited authority, in order to compel him to ſubmit to ſuch limitations of his authority, as may ſecure them from the tyranny of a future bad prince, and may place their happineſs, and the ſecurities of their lives and pro-

perties, on ſome better foundation, than the mere pleaſure of the ſovereign: but when their prince exerciſes his power to the material injury of his ſubjects, it is then not only lawful, but a duty they owe to themſelves and their poſterity, to revolt; for the puſillanimity of their forefathers, by which tyranny was originally eſtabliſhed among them, can in no reſpect alter or diminiſh their inalienable right to liberty, which is the birth-right of every human being.

With reſpect to the divine inſtitution of government, it moſt undoubtedly was the general diſpenſation of providence, that mankind ſhould form themſelves into ſocieties for their mutual defence and protection: but God has left mankind entirely to their own free choice in ſuch formation of civil ſociety. The neceſſity of their union was ſelf-evident—it was obvious to their common ſenſe; they therefore entered into this band of political alli-

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ance, each individual agreeing to ſubmit to the laws, in conſequence of the protection he enjoyed from the ſociety at large: and as ſociety in general was originally formed by the free and voluntary aſſent of its members, ſo were the inſtitutions of particular forms of government entirely human. God has not condeſcended by a particular revelation, to inform mankind how they may beſt be governed; he has not pointed out to us what particular form of government is moſt conducive to our happineſs; the ſcriptures were not written for our information in political matters; thoſe paſſages which apply to thoſe ſubjects, are (as I before obſerved) addreſſed to us as individuals, and were not intended for the inſtruction of mankind collectively: they only inculcate the dutiful ſubmiſſion of individuals to that government which is eſtabliſhed; they do not inſtruct mankind at large that they ſhould live under a monarchical, or any other particular form of government.

In the inſtance of one people only did God aſſume the character of a municipal lawgiver; but no concluſion in favour of a monarchical form of government can be drawn from his conduct towards that people. It is evident that it was his wiſh, that they ſhould be under the guidance of inſpired prophets; but when he found that they wiſhed to be under a government ſimilar to that of the other nations of the Eaſt, he complied with their requeſt, and *he gave them a King in his wrath.*

But even ſuppoſing that God did look upon monarchy as the beſt form of government for the Jewiſh nation, it does not from thence follow, that it is beſt for the great maſs of mankind. Chriſtian nations are no more bound to adopt the political conſtitution, than the religious rites and ceremonies eſtabliſhed in Judea. Different forms of government beſt ſuit the particular circumſtances of different nations; and ſince God has not condeſcended

ſcended to give particular directions on the ſubject, the people at large are the beſt, and of right the only judges of the matter. It is theirs to eſtabliſh, and afterwards, as they ſee cauſe, to reviſe and alter their conſtitution. If this right does not reſide in the people, the Houſe of Hanover are uſurpers; their claim to the crown is derived ſolely from the people. How ſurprizing then is it, that a prince, who poſſeſſes no title, not even the ſhadow of a title, but what is derived from that ſource, ſhould receive into his confidence men who maintain principles inimical to this original, unalienable, and fundamental right.

I would not be underſtood to mean the ſmalleſt reflection on our preſent happy conſtitution; or to aſſert, that a form of government *purely* republican ought to be eſtabliſhed in this kingdom: on the contrary, I am firmly convinced, that our preſent form, as eſtabliſhed at the revolu-

tion, is beſt adapted to the particular circumſtances of this nation: but at the ſame time it muſt be remembered, that the monarchical is not the eſſential and indiſpenſible part of our conſtitution; our Liberty is the firſt and moſt important object. To preſerve that ineſtimable bleſſing ought to be our firſt and chief care. Monarchy is but a ſecondary conſideration: it is eſtabliſhed merely for the better ſecurity of our freedom. We ought then to be particularly jealous of thoſe men, who ſeem to conſider a zeal for kingly government as the firſt qualification of a good ſubject, and are perpetually inveighing againſt republican principles, and a republican ſpirit. Our conſtitution is framed entirely on republican principles, and a republican ſpirit is the only ſure bulwark of freedom.

You aſſert, Sir, "that the rewards or "puniſhments of cities and ſtates in this "world always bear ſome due proportion

"to

" to their reſpective merits." For this you advance ſome very cogent arguments, and your doctrine will, I believe, be found to hold good in moſt, though poſſibly not in all caſes; and it furniſhes a moſt clear and undoubted proof, that freedom ought to be conſidered as one of of thoſe bleſſings which the Almighty has graciouſly imparted, for the comfort and protection of mankind; and which ought to be received with gratitude, and defended with zeal; and that arbitrary government, ſo far from being a divine inſtitution, is a divine judgment; ſince the former has ever been the portion of a virtuous and religious people, the latter of a wicked and corrupt ſtate.

Greece preſerved her liberty while ſhe preſerved her virtue: the bleſſing of heaven attended her in all her operations, and ſhe was enabled to ſet the whole power of Perſia at defiance: but when ſhe ſunk into luxury and effeminacy, ſhe fell an eaſy prey

prey to the ſword of the conqueror. The Romans, while they continued an uncorrupted people, enjoyed an uninterrupted ſtate of freedom and proſperity. Domeſtic traitors in vain attempted to reduce them to the yoke of bondage; ſucceſs attended their arms in every quarter of the globe: every year added to their empire, and to their Triumphs.

" *They humbled the proud tyrants of the earth,*
" *And ſet the nations free.*"

But when they loſt that noble ſimplicity, thoſe generous ſentiments, and that bright train of ſplendid virtues, which had deſervedly raiſed them to the ſummit of power and of fame, how reverſed was the proſpect; one deſperate individual was enabled to reduce them to the moſt ignominious ſtate of bondage; and although that tyrant ſoon received the juſt reward of his iniquity, they had not ſpirit to preſerve that liberty, which had been ſo generouſly reſtored to them, by the virtue of a few,

few, but baſely ſubmitted to a ſucceſſion of tyrants, under whoſe inauſpicious government their empire daily decreaſed, till they became an eaſy prey to barbarian invaders.

It is painful to apply the ſame doctrine to our own country: I would willingly draw a veil over its preſent deplorable ſituation: but it cannot eſcape obſervation, that we furniſh an affecting inſtance of the retributive juſtice of providence, Our virtuous forefathers, in England's better days, gained liberty; heaven rewarded their generous efforts with ſucceſs: and they have tranſmitted its ineſtimable bleſſings to us their poſterity. That liberty, through our corruption and degeneracy, is daily loſing ground among us. The Britiſh conſtitution, long the envy of ſurrounding nations, is now mouldering into decay; we are curſed with a miniſtry, whoſe infatuation has ruined a moſt valuable branch of our commerce, alienated our colonies, and diſmem-

diſmembered our empire; and who have manifeſted, in all their meaſures, a ſettled deſign to ſubvert the free conſtitution of their country. "Far different (ſays a very "able * writer) was the proſpect in the "reign of our late monarch, who accept-"ed a ſtateſman from the hands of his "people, who dignified his councils with "ſucceſs, and crowned the evening of his "day with glory. Another monarch aroſe "amidſt this accumulated ſplendor, and "now declines with ſcarce a refracted ray "to cheer the impending gloom, and gild "the twilight of his reign."

National humiliation, in ſuch circumſtances as theſe, was, I am free to acknowledge, highly expedient; but not ſuch an humiliation as enjoined by proclamation, for the purpoſe of promoting the ſhedding of kindred blood. It was very neceſſary to direct our prayers to the Su-

* Julian, in the Gazetteer.

preme

preme Being, in the calamitous ſituation of public affairs—but not to deſire his intervention and aſſiſtance, to enable us to ſubdue our fellow-ſubjects in America—but that he would be graciouſly pleaſed to avert the black cloud which then and now hangs over this nation, from the pernicious counſels of a deſperate junto, and deliver us in his mercy from the preſent adminiſtration, that " ſo the King's throne " may be eſtabliſhed in righteouſneſs."

You are pleaſed, Sir, to call the generous principles of Whiggiſm, " the licen- " tious principles of the times :" but if you will conſult hiſtory you will find, that they are not the fruits of the prolific brains of viſionary enthuſiaſts of modern times; they are the ſame principles which have been uniformly maintained by the wiſeſt and beſt men in all ages of the world, for which the firſt of mankind have ſhed their blood. The great Dr. Price, and other modern writers of Whig principles on the

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ſubject of government, have not introduced novel refinements unknown to former times; they have purſued the beaten track; they have vindicated, with a ſtrength of reaſoning ſufficient to ſtrike conviction into any but the moſt prejudiced minds, the principles which were inculcated and practiſed by Locke, Ruſſell, Sydney, Hampden, and thoſe other illuſtrious patriots, whoſe names ſhine with ſuch diſtinguiſhed luſtre in the Britiſh annals.

On the principles then ſo ably ſtated in the admirable "obſervations on civil "liberty," no charge of novelty can reſt; but the infamous Dr. Shebbeare, and the reſt of the penſioned tribe of Jacobitical writers, have *revived* abſurdities which have been repeatedly expoſed, and in the late reign were almoſt univerſally exploded, as their party, who, in order to diſtreſs a *good* government, aſſumed the maſk of patriotiſm, and hypocritically pretended a zeal

zeal for freedom, were then more cautious of avowing them.

You will pardon the digreſſion, but I muſt further obſerve, that although the great fundamental principle of Whiggiſm has never undergone any alteration, that of Toryiſm has conſtantly ſhifted with the times. The whigs, amidſt all the revolutions of a century and a half, whether baſking in the ſunſhine of court favour, or groaning under the iron rod of regal oppreſſion, have uniformly adhered to one great and fundamental axiom, that all government was inſtituted for the happineſs, and by the authority of the people. The Tories, on the contrary, when in power, have conſtantly maintained the abſurd doctrine of paſſive obedience in its utmoſt extent; but whenever counſels more propitious to liberty have prevailed, they have endeavoured to obtain the confidence of the people, by a fictitious zeal for conſtitutional freedom.

But it ſeems that "theſe principles have "more than once brought this nation to "the very brink of deſtruction." This aſſertion is however contradicted in every page of the Engliſh hiſtory: ſo far from ever involving this nation in misfortunes, they have frequently preſerved it, when wicked princes, ſtimulated by men of arbitrary principles, had well nigh laid the conſtitution in ruins. If our anceſtors had not reſiſted in the days of Charles the Firſt, the conſtitution of this country would have been ſubverted, and an unlimited power of arbitrary taxation veſted in the prince, on the ſame principles on which we claim a right to tax America. Some unfortunate events which followed the execution of that execrable tyrant, are moſt undoubtedly to be aſcribed to the miſguided, but well-meant zeal of a few leading men, who embraced an erroneous opinion, that a form of government purely republican was neceſſary for the ſecurity of the people. This unfortunate miſtake had well

well nigh ruined that liberty which they intended to eſtabliſh, as it made way for the elevation of Cromwell, and the reſtoration of Charles the Second, *without conditions*: it would therefore moſt certainly have been better policy either to have reſtored Charles the Firſt to the exerciſe of his regal functions, on his giving proper ſecurity; or, if the parliament looked upon his offences to be of ſo deep a dye, that nothing leſs than his depoſition or death could ſatisfy the calls of public juſtice, they might have conferred the crown on his ſon, who would gladly have accepted it on any conditions they would have propoſed. But it muſt be remembered, that the impolitic meaſures which were precipitately adopted by the republican party, were uniformly oppoſed by the greateſt part of thoſe illuſtrious patriots, who diſtinguiſhed themſelves in the oppoſition to Charles. But they were overruled by ſuperior force. Theſe meaſures were indeed built on the notion that the

people have a right to make ſuch alterations in the conſtitution as ſhall ſeem expedient to them: but they were not the act of the people at large: and even had they been ſo, no argument can be fairly drawn from the evil conſequences which they produced againſt ſuch a power being entruſted to the people; for an imprudent uſe may be made in one or two inſtances of a power highly neceſſary, and which, in other caſes, may have been attended with the moſt ſalutary effects.

"Theſe licentious principles" effected the glorious revolution, by which the boundaries of civil power were clearly defined. The conſtitution, after all the various fluctuations it had undergone, ſettled, and the civil and religious liberties of this kingdom, eſtabliſhed on a foundation never, I truſt, to be ſhaken by the efforts of wicked miniſters, nor by the corrupt junction of the legiſlative and executive powers. Theſe principles ſeated the Houſe of Hanover

nover on the throne of theſe realms; and in the latter years of the reign of Queen Anne, when the miniſters of that deſpotic princeſs ſecretly endeavoured to undermine the proteſtant ſucceſſion, prevented the return of the Tarquin race, with all the horrors of popery and arbitrary power.

We are told likewiſe, "that theſe wild "notions open a door for anarchy, con-"fuſion, and every evil work to enter." But what evils does not the doctrine of divine right and paſſive obedience open a door for? Is not even a ſtate of nature with all its horrors preferable to thoſe of ſlavery? Survey the condition of thoſe nations which are ſo unfortunate as to have loſt their liberties: weigh with attention every circumſtance of their caſe: paint to your imagination a numerous and opulent nobility, trembling at the nod of one man, dependent on his caprice for their property, their perſonal freedom, and even for their lives; that nobility trampling on

the rights of their unfortunate vaſſals, and every rank of people liable, though guilty of no crime, if ſo unfortunate as to have incurred the diſpleaſure of ſome unworthy tool of power, to be dragged to confinement, and conſigned to the tortures of the rack, and all the horrors of a lingering death. Is it not better to live under no government whatever, than under a government like this, which counteracts all the purpoſes for which government was inſtituted among mankind? A ſtate of nature is moſt undoubtedly injurious to human happineſs; but a ſtate of bondage is degrading to human nature. In a ſtate of nature, the condition of every individual is precarious, as he is continually liable to the injurious attacks of other individuals: but then it muſt be conſidered, that he has the means of defence in his own hands, and is at liberty to uſe them. In arbitrary governments, his condition is equally precarions, and all means and poſſibility of reſiſtance is precluded: in the one he is ever

ever liable to be overpowered by ſuperior force; in the other he is delivered, bound hand and foot, into the iron hands of oppreſſion. Could a reaſonable man for a moment heſitate which condition to prefer?

But it is the higheſt abſurdity to ſuppoſe, that a whole people can ever be influenced by ſo deplorable an infatuation, as to diſſolve all the bands of civil ſociety, and return to the wild anarchy of a ſtate of nature? It is an event unparalleled in the annals of mankind; the caſe never did, nor ever can exiſt. The utmoſt ill-conſequence that the moſt ſanguine advocate for paſſive obedience can predict, from the prevalence of Whig principles, is—that the peace of mankind will be diſturbed by continual and cauſeleſs revolts. This may I confeſs, be the caſe ſometimes: but there is leſs danger of the people making a bad uſe of their right of reſiſtance to tyrannical governors, than there is in arbitrary governments (and if the reſiſtance of

the people is not allowed to be lawful, all princes muſt be arbitrary) of the unlimited authority of the prince being abuſed, to the oppreſſion of the ſubject. So eaſily is the human mind intoxicated by good fortune, that the world has ſeen very few men who could make a moderate uſe of abſolute power; and even where the prince is well diſpoſed, the people muſt ſuffer many oppreſſions from ſubordinate magiſtrates, which may never reach the ear of the prince, and which never can be redreſſed, where the ſubject is not protected by the preciſeneſs of poſitive laws.

But the people are not naturally inclined to revolt. Some few men of deſperate fortunes, who have nothing to loſe and much to gain, may indeed find an intereſt in exciting diſturbances: but the great maſs of the people feel too ſenſibly the comforts of peace, wantonly to precipitate themſelves into the horrid calamities of a civil war. Conſult the hiſtory of mankind, and you will

will find many inſtances of the too long forbearance of the people under the yoke of bondage; but few or none of their cauſeleſs inſurrection againſt a good government, except where they have been ſtimulated by deſigning prieſts, and have acted under the influence of religious bigotry.

Long was Dionyſius, long were the thirty tyrants of Athens permitted to plunder, ravage, and murder the innocent with impunity; nor was the infamous Tarquin ſtopped in his career of violence, till he had deſtroyed the beſt men in Rome, and for a long ſucceſſion of years diſgraced human nature, by a complication of the moſt infamous crimes.

But, not to run into a tedious detail of the events of ancient times, the Britiſh annals afford us not a few inſtances of the patient forbearance of the people. For fifteen years was Charles the Firſt permitted

with impunity to make the moſt daring attacks on the civil and religious liberties of his ſubjects. Parliaments were repeatedly diſſolved for refuſing to comply with his extravagant demands, and members of the Britiſh ſenate were illegally impriſoned, for delivering their ſentiments with a freedom ſuitable to the dignity of their ſituation. For twelve years he governed without parliaments, in defiance of the conſtitution of his country, conſcious that he could expect no ſupplies from them, till he redreſſed the grievances of the nation. Being thus unable to raiſe money in the manner which the conſtitution directed, he had recourſe to the unwarrantable expedient of taxing his ſubjects without their conſent.

In the Star Chamber, moſt exceſſive fines were impoſed on thoſe who preſumed to expreſs their diſapprobation of the meaſures of the court, or to oppoſe the uſurpations of a lordly hierarchy, and cruelties

were

were exerciſed in that deteſtable court, which would have diſgraced even a Spaniſh inquiſition. A man of common humanity muſt be ſhocked, when he reads of the barbarous puniſhments which were inflicted there, at the inſtigation of Laud, and with the approbation of the King: the former of whom, in particular, derived a cruel ſatisfaction from beholding the ſufferings of his fellow Chriſtians, who were frequently conſigned to the moſt excruciating torments, for no other offence than that of having refuſed to conform to the moſt trifling and inſignificant, and too often moſt abſurd and ſuperſtitious ceremonies: one perſon in particular, after languiſhing in priſon till he was reduced to the moſt deplorable condition, was ſet in the pillory, and underwent a moſt cruel whipping, with the loſs of one of his ears, and the ſlitting of one of his noſtrils; which cruelty, after a further very ſevere impriſonment, was repeated. But what was the conſequence of theſe enormities?

Did

Did they drive the people to reſiſtance? No.—One part of the nation emigrated, and ſought, in the deſarts of America, an aſylum from civil and eccleſiaſtical oppreſſion: and thoſe who ſtayed behind, waited patiently the calling of a parliament, which they hoped would procure them a conſtitutional redreſs of grievances, without their being obliged to have recourſe to arms: nor after a parliament was called did they enter into a war againſt the tyrant, till he had repeatedly refuſed to give any other ſecurity that he would not repeat his former infamous practices, than vague promiſes of future amendment, by which they had been before too often deceived.

In the reign of Charles the Second, the backwardneſs of the people to revolt was equally apparent. They beheld with indifference the fate of the regicides, whoſe intentions were meritorious, though their policy was defective; and who deſerved the

the thanks of the public for the glorious example they had left for the imitation of ſucceeding generations, by bringing a tyrant to condign puniſhment, and to the ignominy of a public execution. They beheld, with equal indifference, the untimely exit of a gentleman, who had no concern in the decollation of Charles the Firſt; but whoſe only offence was, his having taken an active part in favour of a republican form of government; and whoſe execution was not only a direct violation of the moſt ſolemn compacts, but attended with a circumſtance of cruelty unparalleled in the annals of any other civilized nation. The laſt moments of the dying martyr were diſturbed by the rude noiſe of trumpets and drums, to prevent him from ſtating to the people the juſtice of his cauſe, and rouſing their indignation at the infamous breach of all public confidence to which he fell a victim.

The ſucceeding years of a reign, the commencement of which was thus marked with deliberate cruelty, and almoſt unexampled perfidy, were not leſs diſtinguiſhed by every act injurious to the nation, and diſgraceful to the ſovereign. Open attempts were made to diſpenſe with the penal laws againſt popery; wicked and arbitrary miniſters were openly protected from public juſtice; the deareſt intereſts of the nation were bartered to France, while an unjuſt war was carried on againſt our free and proteſtant neighbours the Dutch; parliaments were diſcontinued, and corporations illegally deprived of their charters, and modelled at the pleaſure of the crown; and the blood of the beſt men in the nation ſhed in contempt of the poſitive laws of the land. But did theſe meaſures provoke the people to depoſe the tyrant? No—They remained too inactive ſpectators of theſe enormities; nor could even the manly eloquence of Sydney, at the moment of execution, rouſe them from

their

their lethargy. The tyrant was ſuffered to die undiſturbed in his bed, and the juſtly execrated author of a nations miſeries ſucceeded to the throne; and late, very late, did he receive the juſt reward of his repeated attacks on the liberties of his ſubjects.

As a ſincere well-wiſher to the Univerſity of Oxford, I confeſs, Sir, I was hurt when I read your warm panegyric on its political conduct. Truly zealous for its honour, I could wiſh that its former conduct were buried in an eternal oblivion: but ſince you have been pleaſed to boaſt of the rectitude of the political ſyſtem, which has been adopted by our *alma mater*, juſtly conſidering, that the merit of having ever ſtrictly adhered to the principles of Toryiſm, and to the intereſts of the exiled family, is now (ſtrange to tell) the ſureſt recommendation to court favour, I muſt be permitted to obſerve, that the notions concerning ſociety maintained by the Univerſity,

verſity, were publicly condemned by the firſt judicial authority, and the ſtatute in which they were contained was conſigned to the flames, with the ſeditious diſcourſe of Sacheverel. And as a proof of their loyalty to the preſent reigning family, it ſtill remains on record, that in the reign of George the Firſt, the heads of the Univerſity were called to the bar of the Houſe of Peers, on account of ſome unſeaſonable expreſſions of attachment to the Houſe of Stuart. In ſhort, as an able writer has obſerved, "their loyalty however conſiſted in oppoſing the meaſures of every good prince, who made the laws the rule of his government, and in ſupporting the meaſures of every bad prince, *till they began to feel the weight of it themſelves.*"

Their conduct in the reign of Charles and James the Second, affords the cleareſt proofs of the truth of the latter aſſertion, and is at the ſame time the fulleſt teſtimony

mony in favour of revolution principles; while the daring attacks of thoſe arbitrary monarchs were confined to the liberties of others, and the friends to conſtitutional freedom were the only victims to regal cruelty, they not only acquieſced under, but abetted, with ſlaviſh zeal, the uſurpations of prerogative, and inculcated, in the moſt unreſerved manner, unconditional ſubmiſſion to the mandates of the court: but when their own intereſts were attacked, and their own rights invaded, they were not willing to practiſe, however induſtrious they had been to inculcate paſſive obedience: they made a vigorous oppoſition to the violation of their charters in the caſe of Magdalen college; and when the Prince of Orange came over to deliver us, they were the firſt to reſiſt, and even offered to lend him the Univerſity plate, to enable him to carry on a war againſt a prince, whom they had called "the Vicegerent of Heaven; the "Breath of their Noſtrils; and the Anoin-

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" ted of the Lord." What then are we to think of a doctrine, which its warmeſt advocates could not bring themſelves to practiſe? Men, while they are ſuffered to enjoy the undiſturbed poſſeſſion of their rights and properties, may talk of unlimited paſſive obedience; but when the hour of trial comes, and they are galled by oppreſſion, they will not be found ſo willing to ſubmit. Human nature revolts at the idea.

I wiſh, Sir, that truth would permit me to ſay, that the abſurd doctrines of Toryiſm are now extinct in this learned ſeminary. But your diſcourſe, and the approbation with which it has been too generally received in the Univerſity, are irrefragable proofs to the contrary. Nor are they confined to the Univerſity; it is a melancholy reflection, that ſome of the firſt families in the kingdom are ſtill infected with theſe degrading notions. The deſcendants of thoſe who diſtinguiſhed them-

themſelves by their adherence to the Houſe of Stuart in general, inherit the political principles, as well as the eſtates, of their families. Indeed, none but men of ſound ſenſe, and great liberality of ſentiment, are able to ſhake off the prejudices of education; and although, in this degenerate age, too many inſtances occur of apoſtacy from family virtue, very few are to be met with of deſertion of family prejudice. It would be an invidious, and at the ſame time, a painful taſk, to recite the many inſtances of the former; and it would be with-holding the tribute of applauſe juſtly due to diſtinguiſhed virtue, were I to paſs over in ſilence the merits of * a nobleman, who, ſuperior to prejudices, has renounced thoſe arbitrary tenets which formerly characteriſed his family; and, on † a late remarkable occaſion, made ſo noble a ſtand in ſupport of the expiring liberties of this

* The Earl of Abingdon.

† The American Treaſon Bill.

devoted nation. His conduct on that moſt intereſting matter, will tranſmit his name with honour to the lateſt poſterity: it will be juſtly called,

Clarum et venerabile nomen gentibus:

Would to God I could add!

Et multum noſtræ quod proderat urbi.

But the over-ruling influence of corrupt miniſters has hitherto defeated all the attempts of the true friends to this country to ſave it from impending deſtruction: and the preſent gloomy proſpect of public affairs, forbids us to form any ſanguine hopes of the ſucceſs of their generous efforts.

I have, Sir, I flatter myſelf, ſufficiently demonſtrated the futility of your arguments on the ſubject of government, and the pernicious tendency of the political principles which you have been pleaſed ſo warmly

warmly to inculcate; and now I muſt appeal to every thinking man, whoſe mind is not ſwayed by prejudice, or his judgment biaſſed by intereſt, whether it is not matter of ſerious and juſt alarm to every real friend to conſtitutional freedom, that ſuch principles ſhould be not only publicly maintained without parliamentary animadverſion, but that they ſhould be encouraged openly, and without reſerve, by the firſt ſervants of the crown.

I am very ſenſible, that thoſe who attempt to alarm the people, by expatiating on the arbitrary deſigns of miniſters, are conſtantly repreſented either as factious incendiaries, who wiſh to ſubvert that government which they are not permitted to ſerve; or, as viſionary politicians, who are continually dreaming of the encroachments of prerogative, and derive a melancholy pleaſure from brooding over the ſuppoſed calamities of their country: but theſe general invectives, equally illiberal and unjuſt,

ought neither to deter any man from expoſing violations of public liberty, nor to influence any man haſtily to condemn, as abſurd and chimerical, the accuſations of the opponents to government. It is a queſtion which deſerves the moſt ſerious conſideration of every friend to his country, whether our liberty is really in danger; and I am confident, that whoever coolly conſiders the tendency of the political doctrines which have been encouraged, and of the meaſures which have been carried on in the preſent reign, muſt be convinced, that a regular deſign has been formed, and ſyſtematically purſued by an infamous junto, to extend the prerogative of the crown, and to depreſs the liberty of the people. This important and alarming truth, ought to rouſe the jealouſy of the people; but they ſeem ſunk in a fatal lethargy; they unhappily conſider the American controverſy as a point of honour, and in the fervency of their zeal to ſubjugate the Americans, they readily

readily admit priuciples ſubverſive of their their own freedom, and arm adminiſtration with powers hitherto unknown to the conſtitution; thus giving a mortal wound to their own liberty, in the vain attempt to deprive their tranſ-atlantic brethren of theirs; for Britiſh and American liberty are founded on the ſame baſis; they muſt ſtand or fall together. May then that providence, which has often delivered us from the horrors of arbitrary power, again graciouſly interpoſe in our behalf, and awaken the people of this land from their unhappy deluſion; and may they learn to ſet a juſt value on their conſtitutional rights, and exert a manly ſpirit in their ſupport; calling to mind the ſtriking obſervation of the celebrated Monteſquieu, "that the Engliſh "of all nations ought to be moſt jealous "of their liberties, ſince whenever they "loſe them, they will be the moſt abject "ſlaves in the world."

FINIS.